SECTION VI

THE PURPOSE OF ART-EXPRESSION AND ITS RELATION TO THE INFINITE

The ever-present danger of forgetting the end over the means.

COMING back to Nature — to the stillness of the country, to sky-expanse and wind-driven cloud, to the magic of the woods and the mystery of the starlit-nights — a fundamental truth is ever insinuatingly and forcibly driven home to us. There is a paralysing mistake which all of us are only too liable to make in our art-efforts. In giving the necessarily close attention to the wherewithal of Expression, be it in composition or in performance, painting or poetising, or in the teaching of these things, there is always this great danger lurking for us, that we are liable not only to forget Art in the doing of it, but liable to forget *what should be the purpose of Art* — the very purpose of our pursuit!

Brought back into close contact with unsullied, un-brick-poisoned Nature, that purpose reasserts itself in tones that refuse to be passed by unheeded.

The purpose of art is the expression of feeling.

If we are impressionable — and we cannot be artists unless we are — we find that things in Nature and in Humanity around us impress us strongly, in various ways, and arouse in us vivid feelings, or moods. Now, the purpose of Art, whatever its form, is primarily and mainly the expression of Moods and Feelings, thus engendered.

If then we would be Artists, we must earnestly and honestly strive to do neither more nor less than to give

expression to such emotional states, moods, or feelings. We must use our intelligence so that our feelings shall be duly expressed. And if we do use all our technical resources for this *sole purpose*, we may possibly succeed in producing a real, living work of Art, which, being vivid, may in its turn impress others with a mood, feeling or emotional state — possibly of a like nature.

The attempt to write notes, or play them, or sing them, or to recite, or paint, or versify, *unless under such emotional stress*, can only lead to failure — sheer waste of time, sheer folly so far as true Art is concerned. "Nothing can only produce — Nothing!"

Of course it does not follow, that even if we do try our utmost to attend to the mood induced in us by Nature herself, by human feeling, *or by some real work of art*, that therefore we ourselves shall succeed in producing a real work of art; but we shall know, at least, that we are on the right track. The other ever remains empty Nothingness, mere pretence and hypocrisy— Artisanship maybe, but not Art!

Art-moods which make for good and which make for evil.

Also there always remains the question, WHAT MOOD? — but that is another story! There are moods that *raise* us or help us to raise others, — moods that help us to live and think better; or, on the other hand, there are moods which have quite the reverse effect. . . . Thus we may have Art which is a mere pandering to self and morbidity, or we may have Art which raises our thoughts beyond the daily necessity (and struggle very often) of making our daily bread. Art, which may help us to see the great wonder of Nature around us, and to see how, in our own lives, we can be more or less in harmony with it, *if we but try*. And our thoughts revert to those real masterpieces of Nature-music of which

BEETHOVEN and BACH, for instance, have given us so many.[1]

Health and mood.

[1] The fact of our being at all "in the mood" to compose or perform is, however, a question quite distinct from this one.

After all that has been formulated as to the facts of *doing*, we are nevertheless helpless, unless we happen to be in such a performing or composing "mood" or humour — helpless, so far as the attainment of any really valuable artistic result is concerned.

True, a knowledge of the facts and laws of Expression and Technique will enable us to lessen the evil effect of "non-mood," and also such knowledge will enable us better to express ourselves during the stress of so-called "Inspiration," but the exceedingly exasperating fact remains, that in the end we remain very much at the mercy of our bodily moods — physical moods wrought by our precise state of health! The whole question resolves itself ultimately into one of Vitality. It is possible that we may be "in the mood" or "inspired" when the thermometer of our vitality is high, but we cannot be when it is low — notwithstanding what seem to be occasional exceptions to this rule, when a feverish state of over-excitement stimulates our imagination, and simulates the effects of true vigorous vitality. It is when our vitality-thermometer is high that we feel alert and keen mentally, find ourselves open to new impressions, and alive to the promptings of a healthy imagination vividly active for the time. But when the tide of vitality is at its lower ebb, neither can we assimilate new impressions, nor will our brain provide any. Moreover, these mental states re-act with redoubled effect muscularly. Remember, the "natural" state of the muscles is one of tenseness, not one of relaxation; this is the meaning of "rigor mortis." In order to *relax* our muscles we must use up vital energy. Take away that energy and they close up and tighten.

Thus it happens, when our vitality is at a lower ebb, that all the muscles of our body tend to approximate to the state of death; there becomes evident in them a tendency towards less promptitude and less ease in relaxation than obtains during our moments of full vital energy. Any gymnastic action or exertion (such as Pianoforte playing or Singing, etc.) which we may undertake under such unfavourable conditions of mind and body, will have to be fulfilled while the "opposite" or "contrary" muscles remain more or less active — tense and impedimental therefore.

Here we see why it is, that when we are not in a musical mood (i.e.,

The nature of music, its relation to all-pervading rhythm and to the ultimately unknowable.

Now, these thoughts can be profitably pursued still further, and to good practical purpose. In the factor which all sane musicians hold and consider to be the most striking manifestation of Music, the very basis, the very life of it, we shall find a good foundation for the belief that Music is intimate with Nature herself. This factor is what we term Pulse, Time, Accent, that is — Rhythm.

It has been conceded by many that Music is the most powerful of the arts, that it is the art which brings us most intimately into communion with the Ultimate Unknowable in Nature, that it seems to be *the* form of human thought which brings us nearest to an overcoming of the very limitations of our Thought-mechanism . . . — that it brings us most nearly into contact with that which must forever remain outside the grasp of our Mind.

Now the reason why Music is thus the most powerful of the Arts lies surely in its immediate relationship (through Pulse, Time and Accent) to the cosmic all-pervading Rhythm — its relationship to the ultimate Fact and Being of the Universe.

Most of us, I hope, do recognise that Music is indeed dead as a door-nail unless the keenest sense of Pulse and Accent is kept alive and insisted upon by teacher, pupil

not in a state of general alertness) our Technique also is found to be unresponsive, woefully impoverished and nullified.

It is our vitality which is the ultimate cause of our seeing vividly what to do, our vitality again which leaves our muscles unfettered by their fellows.

If we bear these facts in mind, we can however in some measure lessen the evil effects of the muscular tension of a low vitality, by *inhibiting* the wrong exertions, by trying to be effortless, by trying to remember the sensation of ease experienced at more favourable times coupled with keen rhythmical alertness, and thus recall somewhat the feeling of unrestrained, vigorous rhythmical *doing* associated with our moments of bright vitality.

and performer. Sounds, however finely we may inflect their tone and duration, signify nothing *unless* the vitalising basis of Rhythm is insisted upon — in the form of a well-defined Pulse, and in the form of constantly-continued accentuational GROWTH.

It is indeed solely through its direct appeal to our sense of Pulse-throb, sense of rhythmical growth and Progression, that music rouses us to a sense or feeling of *something vital and alive.*[1]

Through this supreme fact of its manifestation, Music, indeed, brings INFINITUDE itself within our ken. It is easy to realise why this is so. . . .

Glibly enough do we speak of the ultimate unknowables, Time and Space. But we do not always realise, that while we cannot think of any manifestation of Energy or Matter *without* the element of extension in Space, nevertheless, *all* manifestations (whatever their nature, including those of Thought and Consciousness itself) must ultimately resolve themselves into manifestations of Pulse — or Extension *in time!* Pulse—Vibration—Rhythm indeed pervades everything; and, in fact, constitutes *the ultimate of all that is.*

If we look around us, all that which we call "life" exists solely by nature of this vitalising element of Pulse, from Humanity down to the mere Diatom. Again, if we look outside that limited series of manifestations called

[1] Omit this, and music is indeed dead and useless — merely a succession of "pretty noises." But give it, and then with it, and through it we have the strongest appeal to the very fundamentals of our nature — always provided that the hearer is a Seer in a measure, and is not stone-blind or deaf to musical feeling and human emotion. Thus we gain a vision, a faint one maybe, but a convincing one, of the Something which is the very basis of Nature, outside our thought and sense-perceptions. Such is the wonderful power which Music can have over us — the power of opening up to us a glimpse of the BEYOND!

life, and on a starry night realise the unthinkable, stupefying infinitudes of the star-depths, we become all the more conscious of this persistence of the element of Pulse, or Rhythm! If we turn to a consideration of the various manifestations of Energy — Sound, Light, Heat and Electricity — again are we brought face to face with the almighty doings of Pulse, — Pulse, in the form of infinitely quick vibrations, still more overpowering in *their* grandeur. Nay, the very *thing* we call Matter, the very substances which form our seemingly inert Earth (with all its metals, its rocks, and its gases) do we not find that even this seemingly "dead" matter in the end probably resolves itself into variously constituted manifestations of PULSE — the Rhythm of "vortex atoms?"

Here then, we are face to face with that One, Allpervading, ultimate SOMETHING — the vitalising, palpitating factor, which, although forever incomprehensible, is tremendous in its Almightiness. In a word, we are fain to feel that we are here face to face with that ultimate, Unknowable Fact, or PRESENCE which the older Religions have with one accord recognised — which they have indefinitely felt themselves conscious of — and which they have all tried to sum up in the same WORD. . . .

Because it is the essential manifestation of *that prime fact*, because Pulse *is* Life, therefore it is that we feel Music to be alive when in its pursuit we do act in consonance and harmony with that Supreme Fact . . . and are therefore *in harmony* with NATURE herself!